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SUBJECT: SPAIN/ETA: RARE POLITICAL UNITY IN WAKE OF ETA
ASSASSINATION

¶1. (U) Spanish political leaders from virtually every stripe have presented a united front in the aftermath of the December 1 shooting in the French town of Capbreton that left one Spanish Civil Guard officer dead and another in a coma. The officers, part of a bilateral counterterrorism initiative conducting joint operations with French security forces against ETA leadership, were shot after they had exited a cafe. The victims were reportedly out of uniform and unarmed. This is the first killing of a Spanish Civil Guard member by ETA since December 2002, and brings to 206 the total number of Guards killed by ETA during their almost 40-year terrorist campaign against the Spanish government. This murder also marks the first assassination by ETA in France since 1976. The assailants, described in press reports as two men and a woman, fled the scene in one vehicle but later carjacked another at gunpoint, briefly kidnapping a woman and her daughter. The suspects are still at large, and French and Spanish authorities found material in the first car that leads them to believe ETA members were preparing a terrorist attack to coincide with the December 6 holiday commemorating the Spanish Constitution.

¶2. (U) All Spanish political parties, except Basque National Action (ANV) and Batasuna who have ties to ETA, met in an extraordinary session of Congress later in the day to sign a joint declaration condemning the attack and expressing support to security forces in the fight against terrorism. They called for a demonstration to take place in Madrid on December 4 under the motto "For Freedom and the Defeat of ETA." This is the first time since the Madrid train bombings of March 11, 2004 that Spain's two main political parties, the ruling Socialist government of President Zapatero and the main opposition Partido Popular (PP), will appear together in a public event denouncing ETA terrorism, and PP leader Mariano Rajoy offered his party's full support to President Zapatero. The Spanish government announced on December 2 that it would not allow ANV to participate in the March national elections because of suspicions that it supports ETA terrorism.

¶3. (U) The slain Civil Guard officer was identified as Raul Centeno, 24, and his partner Fernando Trapero, 23, is in a coma and has been declared brain dead. An emotional state funeral for Centeno took place on December 2 and was attended by the Spanish Royal Family, President Zapatero, GOS ministers, and members of the diplomatic community.

//COMMENT//

¶4. (SBU) The murder of officer Centeno is certainly tragic, but our contacts in the Spanish Ministry of Interior tell us this event does not appear to have been premeditated and was

most likely the result of a chance encounter. French and Spanish CT cooperation has greatly increased over the past few years and ETA members operating in France have very little room to maneuver. However, this attack and the suspects' ability to remain at large a few days after the shooting shows that at least some ETA members remain active on French soil. We believe this weekend's events will lead to even better cooperation and more joint operations.

Spanish political parties have shown a rare degree of unity that probably will not hold during the intense political campaign expected in advance of national elections on March 19. The Zapatero government appears close to de-legalizing ANV, a step the PP has demanded Zapatero take for many months, and probably will time the official announcement for maximum political gain and to take the wind out of PP charges that Zapatero has been soft on ETA terrorism.

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